

**Impact of intergenerational trauma transmission
on the first post-Soviet generation**

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Certificate of Original Authorship

I, ANNA DENEJKINA, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution. This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

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Abstract

Artyom Borovik wrote that ‘Afghanistan became part of each person who fought there. And each of the half million soldiers who went through this war became part of Afghanistan.’¹ This mixed-methods study focuses on familial relationships pertaining to returned Soviet veterans of the Soviet–Afghan War, 1979 to 1989, examining the impact of the conflict on the first post-Soviet generation through the intergenerational transmission of war-related trauma from parents to children.

Research was conducted from 2015 to 2018, with fieldwork conducted in Russia in 2017, and survey data collected between 2016 and 2017. The qualitative analysis was based on interviews with veterans, now-adult children of veterans, and veterans’ other family members. The quantitative analysis was based on questionnaire responses from now-adult children of veterans.

The study was conducted using an exo-autoethnographic framework, a methodology developed during this PhD. Exo-autoethnography is the autoethnographic exploration of a history whose events the researcher did not experience directly, but a history that impacts the researcher by proxy through the familial environment. In this first conception, the methodology is a merger of the fields of psychotraumatology and autoethnography, connecting the present with a history of the other through trauma transmission and experiences of an upbringing influenced by parental trauma.

Research results show an ongoing impact of the Soviet–Afghan war on the first post-Soviet generation. This study provides four key findings: intergenerational trauma transmission, domestic violence, collective trauma and mental health in the former Soviet Union, and makeshift group therapy and substance abuse.

The outcome of this research demonstrates a strong likelihood that the correlation of mental health issues between children and their veteran parents is a result of intergenerational effects of military service in the Soviet–Afghan war. The implications of these findings show the grave situation of mental health and trauma in the former

¹ Borovik, A. 1900, *The hidden war: A Russian journalist's account of the Soviet War in Afghanistan*, p. 1.

Soviet Union, which continues to function as it did prior to its disbandment: individual mental illness and trauma continue to be 'disappeared'. This issue highlights the radical need for improvement in mental-health education and support within the former Soviet Union generally, and within the military services specifically.

This thesis includes an exo-autoethnographic component: a creative work reflecting the fieldwork and research in book form, including the personal experiences of the PhD candidate relating to her upbringing as a child of a Soviet–Afghan war veteran.